

# IJEA SOCIAL MEDIA

## TELLING IJEA'S STORY • A Social Media Strategy

Social media should be an essential part of IJEA's outreach to its various publics. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allow us to communicate directly and conversationally with current members, potential members, peer organizations, fellow educators in other states, student journalists, professional journalists, thought leaders and friends of scholastic journalism around the country. We can listen in real time to what our audiences say about the issues relevant to our mission. We can join the conversation and position ourselves as an authoritative voice in scholastic journalism



Social media allows us to be our own gatekeeper, but it also imposes on us the responsibility to provide value to those with whom we want to engage. We must be active on whatever platform we decide to use, enthusiastically sharing content that our audiences find useful, relevant and helpful. Yet we can't be all work and no play. Social media is the ideal communal space in which to convey the passion, enjoyment and camaraderie that keep us going as journalism educators. Here are some suggestions for how we can strategically use social media to tell our story and advance our mission.

**Note:** Each platform listed below is accompanied by a status update (i.e., whether IJEA currently uses the platform and, if so, how frequently); general goals for future use of the platform; specific action steps to achieve those goals; and target dates for implementing the proposed steps.

### TWITTER

■ **Status:** An IJEA Twitter account exists but is used infrequently.

■ **Goals:** Provide info about IJEA activities; share links to outside resources; build a sense of community.

■ **Action steps:**

- Post three to four tweets daily, spaced out during the day for maximum reach.
  - At least one tweet a day should link to a tip or some type of practical advice that followers can use.
  - At least one tweet a day should link to an example of good scholastic journalism.
  - Tweets should be focused on scholastic journalism but shouldn't ignore the larger j-world.
  - Tweets should link back to original content on our own website whenever such content is posted.
  - Tweets should be used for starting or participating in conversations when the opportunity arises.
  - At least one hashtag should be used in every tweet; an image should be used whenever possible.
- Promote live-tweeting and appropriate hashtags at IJEA conferences and IHSA competitions; live-tweeting is a way to publicize our Twitter feed while also sparking engagement and conversation.
- Publicize our Twitter feed with an article on IJEA's website; cross-post the article on Facebook.
- Seek followers by following current and potential members, peer organizations, leading advisers in other states, professional journalists and (when appropriate) student journalists.

■ **Target dates:** Begin tweeting daily during first full week of April; be ready to live-tweet IHSA finals May 1.

### PINTEREST

■ **Status:** An IJEA Pinterest account does not yet exist.

■ **Goals:** Provide visually attractive archives of shareable j-resources; position IJEA as a go-to place for ideas.

■ **Action steps:**

- Create pin boards containing tips and advice in all main areas of the scholastic journalism curriculum.
- Create pin boards containing award-winning work from IJEA contests, Pacemaker contests, etc.
- Create pin boards containing representative work from IJEA schools and their peers around the country.
- Publicize our Pinterest boards with an article on IJEA's website; cross-post it on Facebook, Twitter.

■ **Target dates:** Begin creating pin boards during first full week of April; have first batch ready by May 1.

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## INSTAGRAM

■ **Status:** An IJEA Instagram account does not yet exist.

■ **Goals:** Tell visual stories of IJEA members and their students; build a sense of community.

■ **Action steps:**

- Post photos of IJEA members and students participating in conferences and workshops.
- Post photos of IJEA students competing in onsite contests.
- Post photos of IJEA members and students behind the scenes at work and after deadline.
- Post photos of keynote speakers and session presenters at IJEA conferences, workshops.
- Use multiple hashtags for maximum reach.
- Encourage IJEA conference and IHSA contest participants who are on Instagram to take photos of the day's events and use at least one common hashtag when posting.
- Use IJEA conferences and IHSA competitions as occasions to promote our Instagram account and gain followers.
- Publicize our Instagram account with an article on IJEA's website; cross-post it on Facebook, Twitter.
- Cross-post our Instagram photos on IJEA's Twitter and Facebook accounts when appropriate.
- Remember that these photos are ideal for telling the "people story" behind IJEA's mission, which is the story we most want to tell – the story of how IJEA helps teachers and students.

■ **Target dates:** Create IJEA's Instagram account in early April; be ready to use it at IHSA finals May 1.

## FACEBOOK

■ **Status:** An IJEA Facebook account exists and is used about seven to nine times a month to post updates.

■ **Goals:** Provide even richer info about IJEA activities; engage with our publics; build a sense of community.

■ **Action steps:**

- Post original content more frequently, keeping in mind that we don't want to overload our fans (those who have "liked" us); we should aspire to a daily Facebook presence, but Facebook posts should not be as numerous as tweets.
- Use Facebook to share original content posted on our website.
- Use Facebook to share photos posted on our Instagram account.
- Use Facebook to share noteworthy content from outside sources – but not as often as on Twitter.
- Even though Facebook allows more space than Twitter, keep Facebook posts short.
- Prioritize uploading of photos; Facebook users generally prefer photos above all other content, so make sure that each post contains an image whenever possible.
- Ask questions that spark conversation; join conversations already in progress; respond to comments.
- Promote our Facebook presence by "favoriting" the Facebook pages of peer organizations.
- Promote our Facebook presence by reminding our publics to like us on Facebook, especially when we have the opportunity to address audiences at conferences and contests.
- Whenever possible, board members can help by engaging with our posts (e.g., liking them or commenting on them) and by sharing our content with relevant audiences.
- Remember that the surest way to get likes on Facebook is to provide value – i.e., content that is useful, helpful, relevant and posted with reliable frequency.
- Remember also that likes are just means to an end; our ultimate goal with Facebook, as with all social media, is to use the platform to tell our story and advance our mission.
- Facebook is especially effective for telling our story because it is built for sharing content; by providing value, we make it more likely that readers will share what we publish, which in turn increases the likelihood that we will reach our relevant audiences.

■ **Target dates:** IJEA is already using Facebook; be ready to keep pace with our other social media accounts; achieve a daily Facebook presence by May 1.

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## IJEA WEBSITE

- **Status:** An IJEA website exists and is used to post important updates, but original content aside from conference/contest information and award winners is posted infrequently.
- **Goals:** Serve as anchor to our online presence; be the go-to source for the latest info about IJEA activities, events, deadlines, resources, membership procedures; publish original content that helps establish IJEA as an authoritative voice in scholastic journalism.
- **Action steps:**
  - Post original content more frequently; we should aspire to post something of value on a daily basis.
  - Create a group blog that will serve as the website's main source of original content.
  - Blog posts needn't be long or elaborate; a few paragraphs of relevant, helpful, useful information or commentary about any aspect of scholastic journalism or the j-world in general is enough so long as the posts occur frequently, preferably once a day.
  - Blog posts should be shared on Twitter and Facebook.
  - Publish success stories and impact stories several times a year about IJEA members, their programs, their students and their alums.
  - These success stories, which needn't be long, can be published as blog entries or as featured pieces elsewhere on the website.
  - Publish a monthly Q&A with an adviser; the advisers should represent a cross-section of scholastic journalism (e.g., yearbook, broadcast, print newspapers and magazines, online publications).
  - Create a gallery of IJEA student work; this will be useful for people who don't want to be on Pinterest.
  - Create a photo gallery of IJEA events; this will be useful for people who don't want to be on Instagram.
  - Create an FAQ on perennial topics and issues.
  - Maintain a gallery of links to student publications, primarily those of IJEA members but also student publications of note around the country; this will be useful for people who don't want to be on Pinterest.
  - Maintain a gallery of links to journalism resources; this will also be useful for people not on Pinterest.
  - Maintain a comprehensive calendar of events relevant to Illinois scholastic journalism.
  - Promote and explain the national JEA's certification programs (CJE/MJE).
  - Promote mentorship opportunities as they arise.
  - Recognize that while the above action steps won't and can't be implemented overnight, modest daily attention to the website will pay substantial dividends in the long run.
- **Target dates:** Create a group blog by mid-April and begin publishing brief daily entries by the time of IHSA finals May 1; publish the first adviser Q&A as a test run in May; have the first iteration of galleries and the initial FAQ ready by IJEA's fall conference Sept. 18.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- Former IJEA president Dave Porreca will manage our social media, with special emphasis on:
  - 1) providing a daily Twitter feed;
  - 2) creating our initial Pinterest boards;
  - 3) setting up our Instagram account;
  - 4) ensuring that we have a daily Facebook presence.He will also set up the group blog and begin posting brief daily entries by May 1, with an invitation to all board members to contribute as they see fit.
- When the IJEA Board meets in the summer, members should be prepared to offer their assessment of these social media efforts. This will be the time when we can make major corrections as needed.
- If board members are pleased with the general direction of IJEA social media, then the next step will be to create and administer a survey of IJEA members to gauge their reactions. This will enable us to refine our social media strategy and make sure that we are providing value to our membership.